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C O N F I D E N T I A L MAPUTO 000434

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PGOV MA MZ
SUBJECT: MOZAMBIQUE REACTION TO MADAGASCAR MUTED

REF: STATE 29453

Classified By: P/E CHIEF MATT ROTH FOR REASONS 1.4 (B AND D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In his role as the Deputy President of the SADC Organ on Politics, Defense, and Security Cooperation, Mozambican President Armando Guebuza worked with other members of the Troika to produce a indictment of the coup against Malagasy President Marc Ravalomanana on March 19 in Swaziland. The Troika's communique states that the Organ "condemns in the strongest terms the unconstitutional actions that have led to the illegal ousting of the democratically-elected President of a SADC Member State." On March 19 and again on March 30, Guebuza made brief statements to the press following SADC meetings confirming concerns about the seizure of power and safety of President Ravalomanana, saying that SADC would guarantee his security. Mozambican media and citizenry do not appear to be following the coup closely. The Troika and Guebuza's swift and clear denunciation of the coup differs greatly from its 2008 treatment of the crisis in Zimbabwe. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) Following a preliminary mission to Madagascar by Mozambican SADC Executive Secretary Tomaz Salomao, and a February 14-19 2009 follow-up consultative trip by representatives of the SADC Troika, the Organ met on March 19 in Swaziland about the coup d'etat of President Marc Ravalomanana and released a statement observing a need for greater political dialogue, tolerance, and respect for the rule of law, as well as greater efforts to resolve political challenges peacefully, and a greater respect for human rights among Malagasy stakeholders. The Communique describes the coup as an "illegal ousting of the democratically elected President of a SADC Member State," and condemned Andry Rajoelina's move as "unconstitutional."

¶3. (C) Guebuza spoke to the press following the March 19 and March 30 Troika meetings highlighting Government of Mozambique (GRM) concerns about the seizure of power in Madagascar and the safety of President Ravalomanana, who was seen in Swaziland with King Mswati III on March 24. SADC Secretary Tomaz Salomao described the Organ's relatively slow and silent response to Zimbabwe as the "only alternative in that case," but in the case of Madagascar, Salomao urged greater African support of constitutionally-elected leaders in order to stop the virtually systematic way in which electoral results are contested by African politicians, undermining democratic systems. Media coverage and street buzz surrounding the March 2 assassination of Guinea Bissau President Joao Bernardo Vieira gained much more prominence than the muted reaction to recent events in Madagascar, most likely because Mozambican ties to other Lusophone countries are stronger than links with neighboring Madagascar.

¶4. (C) Comment: Post delivered reftel talking points with no response from the MFA. The relatively swift and clear statement by the SADC Troika differs significantly from the Organ's slow and silent treatment of the Zimbabwe issue in

2008, even though Mozambicans in provinces bordering Zimbabwe share a common heritage and local dialects. While close in geographic terms, the people of Mozambique generally find international politics of the Lusophone world more compelling, and have largely ignored the Madagascar situation. For this reason, President Guebuza's strong statement condemning the coup comes as a surprise, though he may be concerned with the optics of a young up-and-coming politician replacing the Malagasy President, and a statement against such behavior is clearly aligned with Guebuza's own interests of ensuring stability at home even more so than in the region. End Comment.

Chapman